

RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT COORDINATING COMMITTEE
Department of Natural Resources
Room 1010
January 13, 2004

Minutes

Member Present:

SOWARDS, Glade – Utah Energy Office
HARTY, Kimm – Utah Geological Survey
KEENE, Michael – Technology & Science
CANNING, Michael – Division of Wildlife Resources
SCHLOTTHAUER, Bill – Division of Water Rights
HUNT, Gil – Division of Oil, Gas & Mining
KAPPE, Karl – Division of Forestry, Fire & State Lands
GEORGESON, Michael – DEQ/Division of Drinking Water
MILLIS, Eric – Division of Water Resources
GUNNELL, Roy – Department of Agriculture & Food
BAKER, Walt – DEQ/Division of Water Quality
BLATTER, Therron - DEQ/Environmental Response & Remediation
ZAREKARIZI, Susan – State Parks & Recreation

Others Present:

WRIGHT, Carolyn – GOPB/Department of Natural Resources
LANDURETH, Brenda – Department of Natural Resources
HIGDON, Matthew – Bureau of Land Management
SINCLEAR, Jean – Bureau of Land Management (Vernal)

I. Approval of Minutes

Glade Sowards called the meeting to order at approximately 9:00 a.m. Kimm Harty made a motion to approve the December 9, 2003, minutes corrections from Karl Kappe and Glade Sowards. Karl Kappe seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

II. Special Presentations/Discussion

Jean Nitschke-Sinclear, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Vernal Field Office, Utah – Questar Exploration and Production (QEP)

Jean Nitschke-Sinclear, Assistant Field Manager for Renewable Resources and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), BLM, announced that the Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an EIS covering QEP's proposal was published in the *Federal Register* on December 19, 2003. Thus, the timing of this briefing falls within the formal scoping and screening period. Jean provided a *Scoping Notice: Questar Exploration and Production Company's Greater Deadman Bench Environmental Impact Statement* (handout) to the committee. Jean requested that by February 4, 2004, she receive any written issues, concerns on this project (see page 7 of the *Scoping Notice* for the address). Also by that time, please identify any relevant data that should be included in the analysis.

QEP proposes to develop hydrocarbon resources underlying their oil and gas mineral leases within the Greater Deadman Bench oil and gas-producing region (about 20 miles south of Vernal, Utah). A NEPA document was completed in 1992 entitled *Gypsum Proposal and Field Area*. This proposal covers the remaining portion of QEP's existing lease areas. QEP proposes to drill up to 1,239 wells at a rate of 100 to 120 per year over ten years. Two maps of the area are included in the *Scoping*

Notice document, which depict the conceptual design of where the wells and other facilities would be located, land ownership and the general setting of the project.

QEP is proposing 1,240 wells on 99,000 acres with a 40-acre spacing pattern. Some of the proposed wells could be drilled from the same pad (“twinning”). This project could produce nine million barrels of oil and 750 billion cubic-feet of natural gas over the next forty years. Drilling would occur in initially shallow depths, later drilling would reach down to 16,000. The project area includes approximately 85 percent BLM lands, 13 percent state lands and three percent patented private lands.

It is anticipated that about four to five acres per well could be disturbed with this action including access roads. Surface impacts may total 2,600 to 3,300 acres of disturbance. Immediate rehabilitation would occur on 600 acres of the disturbed area. The rest of the disturbed area would be rehabilitated after the project is completed. The project area is within the desert-semi-desert climatic regimes of the Uinta Basin. Both the poorly developed soils and arid climate of the area pose some revegetation concerns. Disturbed areas would require monitoring to ensure successful rehabilitation.

The *Scoping Notice* listed preliminary issues for inclusion in the NEPA analysis and considered environmental protection measures for the following resources:

Soils	Vegetation
Wildlife	Cultural and Paleontological Resources
Noxious and Invasive Weeds	Visual Resource
Special Status Species	Power Lines

The Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for this project is being prepared by Buys and Associates (Littleton, Colorado), a third party contractor. QEP is paying for development of the EIS; however, as the State Director will be the decision maker, the EIS will be prepared and finalized in accordance with BLM and NEPA requirements. Jean invited the committee to provide any relevant data or issues and concerns to be included in the formation of alternatives and their subsequent analysis.

All relevant information received from the public will be addressed in the EIS.

The DEIS is targeted to be released late this summer. BLM will request public input at the time. At least one public meeting will held in Vernal, Utah and possibly one in Salt Lake City depending upon interest. There will be a 45-day comment review for the DEIS. No alternatives have been identified other than those presented in the *Scoping Notice* no action and proposed action.

Jean mentioned other items of possible interest, referencing a map depicting Vernal Field Office (VFO) field development documents that the Office has been or is preparing over the last ten years. In addition to QEP, there are three other field development projects currently undergoing NEPA development: Inland (Myton Bench area), Resources Development Group (south of the White River), and EnCana (north of the White River). BLM has word that EOG will be submitting a field development proposal for their leases in their Stagecoach and North Chapita Units north of the White River. In the past two years, the VFO has permitted three seismic requests (Veritas, Western Geco [Horse Point area] and Trace Energy [Winter Ridge area]). The Bill Barrett Corporation has applied for a seismic exploration permit on public lands; however a portion of the project area

involves Northern Ute lands. The Corporation is currently working with the Tribe to finalize the proposed action on Tribal lands and secure necessary access permits.

The committee asked a few questions regarding tribal lands and injection wells. Please contact Jean with any comments or concerns about this proposal.

III. Reports from Agencies on Any Anticipated Projects

The Vernal Resource Management Plan will be delivered to the printer in February. The Price Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) will be finalized in May with alternatives and impact analysis. The Richfield DEIS in July but they have requested a nine-month extension. The Moab/Monticello will initiate comment analysis and alternative development. A request has been made to initiate a planning process for the Kanab area.

Bill Schlotthauer representing the Division of Water Rights announced that Public Inquiries and the Appropriations sections will advertise two engineering technician positions. The annual water survey has been sent out.

Michael Canning, Division of Wildlife Resources reported that the Wildlife Board approved the revised Utah Sensitive Species List on December 18, 2003. Please use this list and it is available electronically on the website. Additional detail maybe found in the appendix on the website.

Michael Keene, State Science Advisor, reported that Millard County, south of the Delta area, might be the location of a new cosmic ray observatory with a telescope array that will be used to study high energy particles or rays. Japanese institutions primarily fund this 50-million dollar project.

Conditions in Millard County are ideal for viewing due to the atmospheric conditions, no sky-viewing obstructions and existing temperature fluctuations. Actually, three high-energy astrophysics research projects on the horizon that together will make Utah a world-class astrophysics headquarters. It will bring big science industry to Utah.

The project will be located on approximately 1,500 square miles of land managed by Bureau of Land Management, state lands, and private property and several mining claims will be also be involved in project considerations. Project planners will complete an Environmental Assessment (EA). This high economic value project will have low environmental impact since the equipment will be placed by helicopter and the equipment will be solar powered. Funding will be requested from the legislature to assist with an EA for this project. Colorado is also bidding for this facility.

Carolyn Wright will work with Michael Keene to arrange a presentation about this project for the February meeting.

Susan Zarekarizi, State Parks and Recreation, announced that Courtland Nelson has accepted another position in Minnesota. State Parks and Recreation have been involved in several land purchases and swaps including a land purchase at Starvation Reservoir and possibly a few Section 6 trades, if funding is available.

The water quality standards have been revised, approved and adopted by the Water Quality Board as required by the Department of Environmental Quality. The standard for ammonia has been changed anti-degradation policy and rule. The Division of Water Quality is having discussions with Central Utah Water Conservancy District to bring water from Strawberry water Spanish Fork Canyon down to Utah Lake down into the Salt Lake Valley for irrigation purposes. Total dissolved solids and salinity impacts from the project on Utah Lake. The trustee (division director) will make a determination about the Jordan Valley shallow groundwater cleanup project removing selenium out of the groundwater and putting into the Jordan River. Discharge permit issued by the Division of Water Quality impact on wetlands and total dissolved solids is under consideration and may be resended.

IV. Review of Proposed Items as Listed on the Project Management Library

John Harja requested a review of the following projects/priority items in the Project Management Library (PML) #3598 (Grazing Administration-Exclusive of Alaska-Notice of Availability of the DESI for Proposed Regulatory Revisions to Grazing Regulations for the Public Lands and Announcement of Public Meetings) Comments are due February 24, and PML #3534 comments are due January 23 (Environmental Document Grazing Administration – Exclusive of Alaska Proposed Rule/BLM.) Both of these projects refer to the same project however they have different comment dates. Please provide comments on the DEIS. The Please review PML #3602 (Northern Rockies Lynx Amendment DEIS). Copies of the Project Management Library were available at the meeting.

The committee decided not to arrange for meeting refreshments.

V. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:50 a.m. The next meeting will be held on February 10, 2004, at 9:00 a.m., in room 1010.